

Class.
Pam. *McDiarmid, A. P.*

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SERMON

DELIVERED BEFORE

The St. Andrew's Society,

SUNDAY, 27th NOVEMBER, 1887,

—BY—

REV. A. P. MCDIARMID,

IN KNOX CHURCH, OTTAWA.

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ROMANS X., 1.

"Brethen, my heart's desire and my supplication to God is for them, that they may be saved."

Theme,—THE CHRISTIAN PATRIOT'S PASSION.

THESE are the words of a true Christian patriot. No finer example of patriotic virtue and heroism has ever been exhibited than that presented in the life of the Apostle Paul. The *quality* of his patriotism is the highest possible of human attainment. Christianity sanctifies all the springs of human life. It purifies and ennobles, more and more, every natural grace and virtuous impulse of the heart. It inspires the soul with the broadest, loftiest and most hallowed conceptions respecting all the relationships of life. Thereby it kindles in the soul a lofty and sanctified enthusiasm for the performance of the duties based on these various relationships. The spirit of Christ in a man's soul clarifies his vision in regard to all his relationships and obligations, and, at the same time, inspires his soul with purposes and impulses respecting his duties that lift his life up to a grander and diviner elevation. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new." Vital Christianity touches with renovating and quickening power every spring of the life. The father whose heart throbs with the love of Christ rises to higher and holier thoughts and aspirations respecting his child, than the father who lives outside the conscious influence of this divine power and inspiration. Whatever be the relationship under consideration, true and living Christianity gives broader and loftier, purer and diviner conceptions regarding it. By it the soul is made to throb with a quickened, deepened and more hallowed vitality. It makes the husband a better husband; the master a more considerate and humane master; the servant a more conscientious, faithful and cheerful servant. It makes the man in every respect a better

citizen, and a more useful and worthy member of society. By it is the virtuous impulse of *patriotism* strengthened and sanctified. By no other power can patriotism be raised to so high and holy an elevation. Paul had experienced the quickening and sanctifying energy of spiritual Christianity, and, therefore, as I have said, the *quality* of his patriotism was the highest possible of human attainment. Paul was a *patriot*, before he was a *Christian* patriot. The patriotism of Paul the Apostle was broadly distinguished from that of Saul the Pharisee. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. So intense was his national spirit, that he gave himself with all his energy to the suppression, by the use of the most violent means, of that which he believed inimical to their national traditions and hopes. The new life he found in Christ Jesus did not destroy the spirit of patriotism in him. It sanctified it, gave it loftier purposes, and inspired it with a holier devotion. As a Christian his soul went out with all the intensity of its affections and impulses towards his kinsmen and countrymen. "My heart's desire, and prayer to God, for them is that they may be saved." Sometimes his words may impress us as reckless extravagance of language. But they are not so. He speaks with the utmost deliberation, under the profoundest sense of the divine sanction. Listen to his words, "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Ghost, that I have great sorrow and increasing pain in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake, my kinsmen according to the flesh; who are Israelites; whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen." Such was the sanctified passion of this noblest of Christian patriots.

And such was his passion for the well-being of his kinsmen even though his special mission was to carry light and salvation to those races alien to that commonwealth that so enslaved his affections and interest. Away in a western land, ministering to the spiritual wants of other races, his heart still throbs with the warmest and strongest patriotic aspirations. My heart's desire, and my prayer to God, is for my kinsmen that they may be saved.

And such was his patriotic passion even though his kinsmen treated him as a renegade, and hunted him with relentless madness from city to city. This was over again in *Paul* the matchless spirit of Christ Himself. Hear Him, whom his own people despised, rejected and crucified,—“O, Jerusalem,

Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, but ye would not."—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."—"Beginning at Jerusalem"—The spirit was imperishable, indestructable. The malignant hatred, the relentless fury, the heartless cruelty of his kinsmen according to the flesh could not kill this heaven-born impulse.

Patriotism is a native instinct of the soul,—a subtle emotion of the human spirit heaven-born in its source.

"Breathes there a man with *soul* so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
'This is my own, my native land?'"

It is one of the high instincts and lofty virtues of our nature. It is liable, certainly, like any other virtue of the soul, to be degraded, corrupted, transmuted into a feeling monstrous in its nature, and operating disastrously in its effects. Self-seeking demagogues have often abused this instinct in a people by prostituting it to the achievement of their own iniquitous ambitions. And you know how well they have often succeeded. Yet this condemns not the high character of the instinct. Its capacity for being so abused is perhaps itself some indication of the large and lofty possibilities in its right use.

High as is patriotic feeling in its ideal exercise, we must not, however, regard it as the highest instinct of the soul. I sometimes fear there is on the part of some the danger of making patriotism the supreme virtue of life. In such case we make that a master-passion of the soul, which ought rather to hold a place in subordination to instincts and impulses that from their higher nature ought to rule the life. Usurpation of power invariably begets disorder and disaster, whether in the soul or in the nation.

Love is the soul's richest, holiest, heavenliest treasure. It is the soul's richest and divinest life. It is the highest virtue in the universe. "*God is love.*" Love fixes itself on a great variety of objects. These objects are of varied worth and rank,—from God Himself to every creature of his hand. The soul's love of God is, by unquestionable right, its supreme affection. The love of God, based on an intelligent and true apprehension of His being and character as revealed in His works and in His word, ought to be the soul's master-passion. No other affection ought ever to be permitted to usurp its place. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength." "He that loveth father or mother, brother or sister, more than Me is not worthy of Me." When this highest instinct of the soul goes out to God,—when love to God becomes the

master-passion, the life is lifted up into its true place of being and action.

But God never designed that other objects should not have our affection. By the very instincts He implanted in our constitution,—some of them by sin grossly perverted indeed, yet even these manifesting some indications of their original purity and beneficent offices,—as by the teachings of His holy word, we learn that other objects are to enjoy the bestowal of our affections. This gift of our love is to be proportioned to the nearness of relationship, and the nature of the relationship to us of the objects on which it is bestowed. After God, one's own family, husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, should take the next place as the objects of human love. When the Saviour said, "He that loveth father or mother, brother or sister, more than Me is not worthy of Me," He evidently intended to establish His claim of supremacy over those who had the strongest claims of all others upon our love.

The patriotic impulse is an expansion of the love of family. The family, the clan, the race: Kinsmen, countrymen.

I ought to refer to another relationship than that of blood, that claims the warmth and wealth of mutual affection on the part of those it embraces. The great family of God, those who love God and His Son Jesus Christ supremely, and into whose soul the Holy Spirit has breathed "the spirit of adoption,"—are bound together in the bonds of holy love.

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love.
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

We share our mutual woes;
Our mutual burdens bear
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear."

All God's true children are citizens of one country, even a heavenly. One spirit,—a bond stronger than that of blood—animates them all. Hear what Paul, the acknowledged patriot, says when he speaks to those of gentile stock, who have become animated by the spirit of God,—“Ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.”

But though Paul recognized, and strongly emphasized, this kinship of all believers in Christ, he yet acknowledged the propriety, and abandoned his own soul to the full power, of that patriotic impulse that made the interests of his kinsmen according to the flesh an incessant care. True Christianity does not, there-

fore, by broadening our conceptions of our relationship to the entire human race, and especially to the entire brotherhood of believers of every kindred, nation, tongue and people,—destroy, nor was it intended to destroy, while we are in this state, the affection we have for our countrymen and kinsmen according to the flesh. It sanctifies and elevates our patriotic feelings, as it did in the case of this great Christian patriot who so longed for the salvation of his countrymen.

This native instinct of the soul will be stimulated and strengthened by every historic achievement of our forefathers we delight to cherish, as by every quality in character and life we deem worthy of admiration. Paul found the history of his people very stimulating to his patriotic impulses; and not only their history but that which seemed a great possible destiny. Who are his people? What has been their history? How the thoughts come rushing in upon him! My people, my countrymen! Their's is "The adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers,"—what a magnificent galaxy of names—heroes and statesmen, prophets and poets!—"and of whom," crowning glory of all—"is Christ as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever." The possible destiny of a people with such a history! Will they forfeit all these sublime possibilities? There seemed great danger of it. Paul felt that he could not let his people, a people with such a history, and, if only found worthy, a people of destiny,—fall away without a supreme spiritual struggle on their behalf. "My heart's desire, and prayer to God, is for them that they may be saved." "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake; my kinsmen according to the flesh."

The sons of Scotland are strongly imbued with the patriotic spirit. Strong affection for country and kinsmen,—“clannishness” some term it,—is a striking characteristic of our race. It is not without reason. The struggles for civil and religious liberty, protracted through centuries, did much to knit the hearts of the people together, and to develop strength and nobility of character. The struggle for national independence, and the well-won victories of the doctrines of the Reformation in Scotland, did much to shape and develop national life, and to lay the foundations of the sterling character, for which Scotchmen have a reputation the world over. In these struggles Scotland revealed the heroism of her sons. She is justly proud of such heroes as Wallace and Bruce in the field, and John Knox and Andrew Melville in the religious arena. Out of this latter conflict especially were developed forces that have largely contributed in producing the

characteristics of the Scottish race. The author of "The Scot and British North America" remarks that, "The industry, enterprise and thrift of the Scot, informed and sustained by sterling probity, sensitive pride, independence, self respect, and an abiding regard to duty for its own sake, have made him an inestimable power for good the world over * * * The inestimable qualities, social and industrial, which have made the people of Scotland so prominent in almost every land in which they have settled, are the accumulated results of many ages of poverty, hardship, toil and suffering, and cannot be effaced by volition or effort. But the greatest factor of all in any right estimate of that character * * * is the moral bent it has acquired through centuries of severe discipline, and that is in the main due to the religious element which has formed the backbone of Scottish history for the last three hundred years."

Is it any marvel that a people having such a history of hardship, toil and suffering, through the discipline of which have been developed the sterling qualities of character—is it any marvel, I ask, if we find them strongly knit together as a people? The man who faithfully studies the history of their national, industrial and religious struggles, and traces the development of character through the discipline of these struggles protracted through centuries, will surely pardon the children of Scotland if they are a "wee bit clannish."

The instinct of patriotism thus stimulated and strengthened needs however to be wisely directed in the aims and pursuits it begets. We are strongly attached to our country and to our countrymen. Does our interest in them assume any practical shape? If so, is it a worthy one? Paul's answer to this question with reference to his countrymen was ready: "My heart's desire, and my prayer to God for them, is that they may be saved." This was the ardent longing of his soul for the people who were peculiarly dear to him. This is *the highest and noblest aspiration of patriotism*.

The true patriot is always ready for the conflict with an invading foe. He will lay down his life cheerfully in defence of his country, and of his countrymen's rights and liberties. Against all odds he will take his stand if his country's freedom is imperilled. He will not stand by, with craven heart, and see his countrymen enslaved. He will strike for his kinsman's freedom if a thousand spears are in poise to be plunged into his heart. The occasion is all that is needful to make every true patriot a hero.

How stands it with our countrymen? Are not many of them yet enslaved by the cruellest and most relentless of foes? The

Jew, in his national pride, boasted, "We are Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man." The great Emancipator of human souls replied, "If the Son shall make you free then shall ye be free indeed." "Whosoever committeth sin is the slave of sin." From this enslavement there is no emancipation but through Jesus Christ. What a degrading enslavement it is! Sin the master of thought and affection, of impulse and action! The soul in bondage to this corrupting and debasing power! Paul saw his brother Israelites thus in bondage, and his soul was continually burdened with desire and prayer to God for their emancipation. Paul once in their condition had heard the proclamation of emancipation, and had accepted the conditions. In the joy of freedom, he was made to realize, as he had never done before, the degradation of the bondage in which he had formerly lived, and in which so many of his countrymen still lived. His love for them made him long most intensely for their salvation from this enslaving power.

Kinsmen according to the flesh, I make no apology in now appealing to your consciences as to whether your souls have been set free from the bondage of sin? Are you walking in the conscious liberty of the gospel of Christ? Jesus Christ, the spotless Son of God, died yonder on Calvary more than eighteen centuries ago to make atonement for your sins. That same Jesus Christ now lives yonder at the right hand of God, exalted above all principalities and powers and every name that is named, invested with all authority in heaven and on earth. Is not He a Saviour sufficient to redeem from both the *guilt* and the *power* of sin? "If *the Son* shall make you free, then shall you be free indeed." I believe that I speak to a goodly number this evening who know in their experiences what this freedom is. What now is your desire for your brethren, your kinsmen according to the flesh? Can you make Paul's words for his brother Israelites, your words for your brother Scotchmen? Is your heart's desire and your prayer to God for them that they may be saved?

You will have noticed that my allusion to salvation, as to a salvation *from sin*. The idea prevails in too many minds that the salvation offered through Christ in the gospel is a salvation from hell. It covers this indeed; but this is only a meagre and selfish thought of it. The fundamental and all-embracing thought of this salvation is that it is a salvation from sin. The very naming of the incarnate Christ indicates this; "His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save this people from *their sins*." "He bare our *sins* in his own body on the tree." "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from *all sin*." "Sin shall not have dominion over you."

This is that for which Paul longed with such intensity of desire for his countrymen. I would that every Scotchman I address this evening, who himself knows what this salvation is, should become inspired with this passion of the Christian patriot.

Let us not forget that it is to Christianity, more than to any other cause, that we owe those qualities in Scottish life and character that we hold in just esteem. Christianity has vastly more yet to do for us if we allow its holy principles to root themselves deeply in our hearts. No longer let sin sway the life. Let the spirit of Christ dwell in you, freeing you from the mastership of sin, and lifting you life up to a heavenly plane.

One other thought in closing. Scotland was once inhabited by a large number of clans or tribes. It was through struggles with common foes, and the achievement of common victories, there came the blending of sympathy, the fusion of feeling, and the creation of *national life*. This was a grand result of these long protracted conflicts and trials. It suggests to my mind the picture presented to the seer of Patmos. "After these things," he says, "I saw, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the throne, and before the Lamb arrayed in white robes and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb!" In reply to the question "Who are these?" the answer came from one of the elders, "These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." This is the broader and higher fusion of the sympathies of peoples of all tribes, and nations, and tongues, into *the national life of heaven*. All life there has become fully fused with the life of God of the Lamb. One spirit one shout of triumph—one song of endless praise. "They are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike them nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of them shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." This is the blessed consummation of salvation through the gospel of Christ. Brethren, my heart's desire, and my prayer to God for my countrymen, my kinsmen according to the flesh, is that they may be saved,—that they may participate in this holy and blessed national life of heaven. God grant it through Christ. Amen.

